

April 2010



# Lane County Conservation District

701 W. James Dighton, KS 67839

620-397-5751

## State Cost-Share Sign-Up: March 22- May 8

Beginning NOW through May 28, 2010 is time to apply with the Lane County Conservation District (LCCD) for state financial assistance to install enduring Conservation practices. State Cost-Share programs are implemented to improve Water Quality and reduce Soil Erosion. State monies will become available in July 2010. In order to qualify, you must apply during our designated sign-up period.

Landowners with Natural Resource concerns on their property are encouraged to visit the LCCD office (701 W. James) to discuss the possibility of receiving state financial assistance. Here is a list of some of the more popular practices available.

**This list is NOT inclusive of all practices available, or all eligibility requirements. You are encouraged to visit the LCCD office for more information!**

- **Critical Area Grass Planting:** Establishing permanent vegetation such as a grass mixture on sites that have or are expected to have high erosion.
- **Cross-Fencing:** Enclosing or dividing land with a suitable permanent structure that acts as a barrier to livestock.
- **Grassed Waterway or Outlet:** Shaping of a waterway or outlet in vegetation for the safe disposal of runoff from a field, diversion, terrace or other structure.
- **Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment or Renovation & Trickle Irrigation Systems:** Either establishing or renovating tree & shrub shelters used to diffuse and deflect winds away from livestock, a confined feeding or farmstead, an outdoor living barn, or an earthen berm. Also, irrigation systems used for distribution of water to Windbreak/Shelterbelts.
- **Tree/Shrub Establishment:** To set bare-root or containerized tree seedlings or shrub cuttings in the soil to reinforce a stand of trees and conserve soil & moisture. Applicable in field windbreaks, where erosion control is needed, or in inter-planting in woodland.
- **Flat Channel, Gradient, and Level Terraces; Terrace Restoration of Flat Channel, Gradient, and Level Terraces.**
- **Pipeline:** Pipeline installed for conveying water from a source of supply to points of use for livestock.
- **Prescribed Grazing:** Per acre incentive programs used to improve or maintain plant communities, water quality & quantity, reduce accelerated soil erosion and maintain or improve soil condition where grazing animals are managed. Program standards are in conjunction with Grazing Management Plans developed with NRCS.
- **Water Well and Watering Facility:** A well constructed or improved; a trough, tank, or waterer installed, to provide drinking water for livestock to facilitate proper use of vegetation on rangeland or pasture and/or reduce livestock impacts on streams or riparian areas.
- **Well Decommissioning:** The sealing and permanent closure of a water well no longer in use.
- **On-Site Wastewater System:** Applies to a failing system composed of a septic tank/treatment field, a wastewater lagoon, or an alternative treatment system to treat wastewater from a single family residence, church, school, business or government office on the site at which it is generated. Cost-Share is provided to replace or alter the system (to state regulation, county sanitary/environmental codes) to prevent surface and groundwater contamination by disease-causing organisms, organic matter, and chemicals.
- **Elimination of Abandoned On-Site Wastewater Systems:** The elimination of abandoned, improperly constructed, or inactive seepage pits (rat holes), cesspools, drainage pits and septic tanks used by a single family residence.



**If you're planning on putting in a Windbreak next Spring, apply for Cost-Share this year.**



Funding provided by the State Conservation Commission through appropriation from the Kansas Water Plan Fund.

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### Special points of interest:

- **NEW!** Visit the Lane County Conservation District Web-site at: <http://www.lanecountyccd.com> for information on the District, Products for Sale and Rent, and Cost-Share Assistance.
- Spring 2010 Tree Seedling Orders end **May 2, 2010**.
- NOW AVAILABLE! **PLANT-SKYDD REPELLENT:** Organic repellent to keep Deer, Moose, Elk and Rabbits away from trees, shrubs, flowers, and vegetables. A non-toxic product safe for Kids & Pets. Contact LCCD for more information.

# Windbreak Ground Preparation

## by Darrel Beougher, NRCS District Conservationist

As with all projects we get involved with, a little preparation ahead of time gives us better results. The best preparation that can be done for planting trees for a windbreak is getting the ground in good shape. Good shape means garden clean on the surface. Below ground is often overlooked. Roots from newly planted trees also need an unhindered way to grow down into the soil.

Consistent survival of newly planted trees begins in the fall. The location of the windbreak should be deep ripped if there is any possibility of a hard pan. After the area has been ripped, smooth and level the ground once or twice with a disking before winter arrives.

Spring arrives and the windbreak area should be disked or rotor-tilled prior to planting the young trees. The garden clean

ground is now ready to give a young tree its chance to make its way in the world.

The finely worked soil (as opposed to cloddy soil) packs easily around the roots leaving no air pockets to kill the roots. The ripped soil from last fall leaves a path for the roots to spread downward to moisture.

Other measures may be applied to nurture the small seedlings in short rainfall periods. A watering system (drip irrigation) will provide timely moisture to keep the tree healthy. Weed barrier is another method. It will shade the ground, keep moisture trapped under the material, allow rain to filter through, and stop the growth and competition

for moisture from weeds. Repellants can be applied to keep deer and rabbits from wreaking havoc with the trees.

The Lane County Conservation District and Natural Resources Conservation Service personnel can help with planning, possible programs, and materials to help you create the benefits you get from a healthy stand of trees.

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# Playa Wetlands - An Important Natural Resource

Playas are the most numerous wetland type in the southern High Plains, and in Lane County. There are more than 60,000 in Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. Kansas is home to approximately 10,250 of these unique wetlands. **Lane County** alone has approximately **350 Playa Lakes**. Playas are shallow, depressionnal, recharge wetlands that are generally round and small, ranging in size from a tenth of an acre to 50 acres or more. They have clay-lined basins and naturally fill with water periodically from rainfall and its associated runoff.

A lot of people may have never heard of, nor seen, a playa. More than 90% of all playas are located on private farm and ranchland, so rarely does the general public have access to them. Playas are also seasonal in nature. Depending on the local weather, Playas can be wet year-round, or stay dry for months... sometimes years on end.

## Benefits

You may be thinking, this is great, but how does it affect me? Playas have two main benefits. They are the most important wetland in producing groundwater and protecting wildlife in the region.

**Groundwater:** Playas are the lowest points in large watersheds and focus recharge to the High Plains (Ogallala) Aquifer. (*Lane County is a part of the 174,000 square-mile Aquifer spanning sections of eight states*) The Ogallala is a major source of water for municipalities, industries, and most notably agricultural development. **The primary use of the aquifer is pumping for irrigation**, and consequently water supply has declined steadily since the 1940s, and recent measurements show a 1.35-ft. drop per year from 1992 to 1997.

**Wildlife Habitat:** Due to the wet-dry playa cycles, a highly diverse plant community generates large quantities of seeds. This is essential for millions

of waterfowl and other birds which rest, breed, and nest during migration in this region. Playas support over 350 animal species and 340 plant species.

## Farming Playas

Most playas are surrounded by productive farm ground and have been altered in some way due to agriculture. In fact, it is estimated that more than 70 percent of playas have been altered from their natural state by tilling, pitting, intentional filling or filling through sedimentation. These practices limit the benefits in which Playas were intended. Of these, sedimentation is the most critical threat to playa function, especially in regard to groundwater recharge. Sediment build up reduces the volume of water playas can hold and increases the rate of water loss through evaporation, thus limiting recharge.

Playas are difficult to farm due to their natural wet and dry cycles. In most years a crop may need to be replanted two or three times and even if a crop is raised it may not be harvested due to flooding. Some producers have indicated they only receive a crop from these areas one out of every 10 years.

## Who Can Help?

There is assistance for Landowners/Producers to help preserve these wetlands.

**Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP). Practice CP23A: Wetland Restoration on Non-Floodplains** is designed to restore wetland complexes and playa lakes devoted to agricultural use that are located outside the recognized 100-year floodplain. It is administered by the USDA Farm Service Agency and its purpose is to enhance and provide vital habitat for wildlife. There is a one-time incentive payment for needed wetland restoration and 50 percent cost-share for cover establishment on the buffer. There is also a sign-up incentive payment through Kansas Dept. of Wildlife and Parks of \$15



for each acre of playa and buffer contracted through CP23A. **CP27& CP28 – Farmable Wetlands Pilot Wetland/ Farmable Wetlands Pilot Buffer:** Incentive is provided to (CP27)restore vegetation and hydrology of a wetland to the maximum extent possible and (CP28) provide a vegetative buffer around the wetlands to remove sediment, nutrients, and pollutants from impacting the wetland and to provide wildlife habitat for the wetland. Contact your local Farm Service Agency office for more details on CCRP.

**Wetland Reserve Program:** is a voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical and financial support to help landowners with their wetland restoration efforts. The NRCS goal is to achieve the greatest wetland functions and values, along with optimum wildlife habitat, on every acre enrolled in the program. This program offers landowners an opportunity to establish long-term conservation and wildlife practices and protection. Visit your local NRCS staff for more information.

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## Earth Team Celebrates 25 Years of Volunteering

Earth Team Volunteers exist in every county in the United States. Volunteers are individuals or groups who give their time, talent and abilities to conserving and protecting our Natural Resources, without pay. You must be 14 years of age or older to be a volunteer.

Volunteers help with various tasks and projects such as office and receptionist duties, educational program planning, implementation & development, fair booths & floats, taking photos, wash and clean vehicles, assist NRCS & LCCD with school visits and tours, assist with mass mailings and newsletters, helping at the LCCD Annual Meeting, etc.

We sincerely appreciate the we receive from our volunteers. A huge thank you to our current volunteers; Debbie and Jim Bennett, Gary and LaVera Bartlett, Darrel Beougher, Dennis and Judy Burgess, Helen Hanks, Steve Heath, James Jennings, James Johnston, Orval Jordan, and Arron Von Schritlz.

If you are interested in becoming an Earth Team Volunteer, or would like more information contact LCCD or NRCS personnel.



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**The greatest compliment you can give is a referral.**

## Controlling Residential Runoff

The rain and snow that flows away from your home has great potential for affecting your communities source water. According to the most recent National Water Quality Inventory, runoff from urbanized areas is the leading source of degradation to all water.

Pavement and rooftops generate five times more runoff than a forested area of the same size. Pavement prevents water from percolating into the ground, and instead runoff flows into storm drains, as well as oil, grease and trash picked up on the way to the drains.

To reduce runoff around your home, replace them if pos-

sible with porous surfaces. Sidewalks and driveways can be replaced with small paving blocks, porous paving asphalt, cobles, or gravel. Sidewalks and patios can be exchanged for wooden decking, gravel, brick, paving stones, mulch, grass or other natural groundcovers.

Build a Rain Garden! Rain Gardens are designed low areas, landscaped with plants that soak up storm water from your roof, driveway, and other solid surfaces. These shallow depressions hold runoff and give water time to soak slowly into the ground.

Rain gardens should be situated at least 10 feet from your (cont. on Page 5)

# Expiring CRP Land: Alternatives and Options

Your Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contract is expiring. What are your options?

Land in CRP is considered cropland; however, not all cropland is created equal in terms of erosion and yield potential. In fact, many of the acres enrolled in CRP may be best suited to other land uses such as cropland with buffers, pasture, hay land, or wildlife habitat.

It is a good idea to take a look at your soils and consider these land use alternatives before making any decisions. Areas with steep slopes or more erosive soils may be best suited to stay in CRP or used for pasture and hay land with some renovation and investment. Other areas, including wetlands, concentrated flow areas, field borders, or areas where you may have established trees or shrubs could continue to provide excellent wildlife habitat and add diversity to your

farm. Some of these areas may be eligible enrollment in Continuous CRP. Land coming out of CRP also presents a unique opportunity to initiate a continuous no-till or organic cropping system.

More than likely, the decision you make will depend on a variety of factors:

- Personal goals and interests
- Profitability
- Soil and site limitations
- Rental rates
- Taxes
- Family situations
- Yield expectation
- Livestock access

Your choices impact the local economy, landscape, and environment.

### Options:

- Enroll eligible acres into Continuous CRP
- Return to a cropland rotation
- Utilize and enhance forage as pasture or hay land
- Manage the expired CRP for wildlife
- Potential contract extension or re-enrollment in general CRP, if offered.

Before deciding what to do when your CRP contract expires, it is important to consider several factors: soil productivity and limitations, past yields, commodity prices, production, conversion or renovation costs, and other required investments. To guide you through the decision process, review the following questions. Some are more general while others are specifically related to potential land use(s) you may be considering. Feel free to discuss these questions or issues with the staff at your local NRCS field office.

Contact:  
Windy Scheck  
620-397-5545

**Services Offered:**

- CRP / Grass Mowing
- Well Plugging
- Building Guzzlers

**Con-ser-va-tion** a careful preservation and protection; planned management of a natural resource to prevent exploitation, destruction, or neglect.

That's one definition...here are others:

- Buffalo Grass
- Bluestems
- Wheatgrass
- Bromegrass
- Grama Grasses
- Fescues
- Legumes

Considering CRP?  
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## Residential Runoff (cont.)



house, but near a gutter outlet or a paved surface. However, they should not be built over the septic tank, near any walls or over any buried utilities.

Plants you choose should be able to tolerate both wet and dry conditions. Most rain gardens are dry

the majority of the time. Many native ferns, shrubs, small trees, and wildflowers tolerate the wet/dry cycle of rain gardens. Your local extension agent should be able to suggest suitable varieties.

The first year the most important maintenance is water-

ing and weeding. They need about an inch of water per week until established. An established garden needs to be weeded, cleared of plant debris, and re-mulched in the spring and fall.

Another way to reduce runoff is to use a Rain Barrel to collect and store rainwater from rooftops. They are inexpensive, easy to install and easy to operate and maintain. They can be purchased from garden centers or online, or homemade from food grade plastic barrels or trash bins. Because of possible bacteria from rooftops, they should not be used on vegetable gardens.



**Lane County Conservation District**

701 W. James  
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-Audobon*

It is the policy of the Lane County Conservation District not to discriminate in employment or program services for reasons of race, color, sex, age, religion, marital status, national origin, or handicapped condition. The Kansas State Conservation Commission and Kansas Conservation Districts are equal opportunity providers and employers.



**Lane County Conservation District**

Official Newsletter

April 2010

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:**

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Helen Hanks  
Steve Heath  
James Johnston  
Arron Von Shriltz

**DISTRICT & NRCS STAFF:**

Ann Marie Jennings:  
District Manager  
  
Darrel Beougher: NRCS  
District Conservationist  
  
Leon Scheck: NRCS

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- April 26-May 2 - Stewardship Week
- April 30 - Arbor Day
- May 2 - Last Day for Tree Orders
- May 12 - Area II EO Meeting (Garden City)
- May 19 - LCCD Board Meeting
- May 28 - Last Day for Cost-Share Applications
- May 31 - Office Closed for Memorial Day
- June 15 - 2010 & 2009 State Cost share projects must have been completed and paid, or cancelled
- June 16 - LCCD Board Meeting
- July 5 - Office Closed in Observation of Independence Day
- July 15-18- Lane County Fair
- July 14 - LCCD Board Meeting

The Lane County Conservation Board of Supervisors meets the third Wednesday of each month at the USDA Service Center. If you have any questions or comments for the Board of Supervisors, or suggestions for this newsletter, please call 620-397-5751.

Lane County Conservation District is a proud member of the National Association of Conservation Districts and the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts.